

"Watchman, what of the night?"

The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come. Isaiah 21:11-12

A GOD OF JUDGMENT

[This is the third part of the series on Corporate Accountability.]

Even as there can be corporate repentance, there is corporate guilt; for unless there is guilt, there would be no need to even speak of corporate repentance. When therefore, judgment is executed because repentance has not followed the act of transgression which brought the guilt, how does God relate to the corporate identity involved? Does He separate the individuals who are not directly involved from the judgments which are to fall upon the leaders who have led the people into sin? In other words - to put it plainly - will the laity and the rank and file of the ministry be spared the judgments of God upon the hierarchy who have led in the apostasy from the truth of God? In seeking an answer to this question, we shall consider the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament, and the God of the Spirit of Prophecy.

The God of the Old Testament

In the days of ancient Israel, on their way to the land of promise from Mount Sinai, a rebellion broke out. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram challenged the leadership of Moses. In turn Moses called for the leaders, and those associated with them to appear before the sanctuary that God might reveal His will. Dathan and Abiram refused to come up. The Lord then ordered all of the congregation of Israel to separate from the tents of these men. Because Dathan and Abiram would not appear at the tabernacle, Moses went to their tents, followed by the elders of Israel. Observe carefully what followed. (Numbers 16:26-27) Moses spoke to the congregation saying:

Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs lest ye be consumed in all their sins. So they gat up from the tabernacle of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, on every side: and Dathan and Abiram came out, and stood in the door of their tents, and their wives, and their sons, and their little children. [These little children had not joined in the manifesto which their grandfathers had sent to Moses. See Numbers 16:12-14]

Here were two families - corporate identities - standing together. Two men had sinned - the heads of the households. Here were ties of loyalty, kinship - and there was the command which but a little while before had been uttered from Mt. Sinia - "Honor thy father and the thy mother." Would corporate identification take precedence over individual responsibility, or would the latter prevail? How would the decision of the sons of these men - Dathan and Abiram - effect their

"little children"? Would God separate them from the judgment upon their fathers who had sinned? The record continues:

And Moses said. . . If the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord. And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, . . . They and all that appertained unto them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. (Numbers 16: 28-33)

While the families of Dathan and Abiram fell together under the judgment of God, because their sons refused to separate themselves from their corporate identity, on the other hand the record notes that the sons of Korah died not. (Numbers 26: 10-11) They did not appear with their father and the two hundred and fifty princes who had assembled at the door of the sanctuary to challenge the leadership of Moses and Aaron. They chose to exercise their individual responsibility, and refused to be identified in the corporate entity which in turn suffered under the judgment of God.

The God of the New Testament

On the day of Pentecost - at the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit - there were assembled in Jerusalem for the feast, Jews, "devout men, out of every nation under heaven." (Acts 2:5) These were not wicked men - but "devout" - who had come to Jerusalem from the diaspora in harmony with the instruction which God had given concerning the feasts. Some perhaps had come for the Passover, and remained the fifty days till Pentecost, but others had not even been present at the feast when Jesus was crucified. Quickly coming together due to the excitement and witness engendered by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the faithful followers of Jesus, they listened intently as Peter explained the meaning of what had and was taking place. They heard him say:

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. (Acts 2:22-23)

Those who had not been present at the feast of the Passover were not moved. They had had no part in the crucifixion of Jesus - they were not anywhere near. Those who might have come for both feasts knew that the Romans had done the act. It was their hands that were "wicked" not theirs. So they continued to listen, very sure they had no accountability. Then Peter returns to the theme again, and brings it home. Note:

Let all the house of Israel [the corpus of Israel] know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36)

This now stirred them. Whether present or not, whether a part of the mob who

shouted, "Crucify Him!" - and definitely not a Roman soldier - still they were being charged by God as guilty of the blood of Jesus Christ, and partakers in the crucifixion, because of their corporate identity. Pricked in their hearts they cried out to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles - "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) And their response to Peter's answer determined whether they would be included in the judgment of God upon the nation of Israel.

The God of the Spirit of Prophecy

There are those among the professed people of God who would have us believe that the God with whom we have to do to day is not the God of yesterday. They vainly hope that the God who declared - "My Spirit shall not always strive with men" (Gen. 6:2) - no longer holds to this dictum, but will grant unlimited time to an insubordinate people so that they can repent of their backslidding. The laity are told that God is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Look, they are advised, at all the great and wonderful institutions which God has permitted to be built as monuments to His glory. Will He forsake such a people, and such an organization, they are asked. The reasoning goes - God is different today. Times have changed. He may have called into account the Jewish people who "cherished the idea that they were the favorites of heaven, and they were always to be exalted as the church of God." (C. O. L., p. 294) But this will not be true of the corporate body today. It is going through. To such the God of judgment has died. But, the God of the Spirit of Prophecy is the same God who spoke in Old Testament times, and Who through the Holy Spirit spake the same language on the Day of Pentecost. Read this prophecy carefully:

The Lord commissions His messengers, the men with the slaughtering weapons in their hands: "Go ye after him through the city, and smight; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house."

Here we see that the church - the Lord's sanctuary - was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God. The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light, and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust. . . Times have changed. These words strengthen their unbelief, and they say, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil. He is too merciful to visit His people in judgment. Thus peace and safety is the cry from men who will never again lift up their voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions and the house of Jacob their sins. These dumb dogs, that would not bark, are the ones who feel the just vengeance of an offended God. (5T:211)

As we read this, we say, "Amen, so be it, Lord." Those who betrayed their trust should suffer the just vengeance of an offended God. BUT, this is not all to the prophecy. There is one more sentence. It reads - and as you read - tremble for yourselves, and weep for the others:

Men, maidens, and little children, all perish together. (ibid.)

Why? Because they are identified corporately in the guilt of their leaders, and have refused to exercise their individual responsibility. The God who held the sons, the son's wives, and their little children guilty with Dathan and Abiram; the God who held the "devout men" of Israel equally guilty with the "wicked hands" who crucified the Lord of glory, is the same God who will visit in judgment, not only the leadership who have "betrayed their trust," but the laity - the men, maidens and little children of the Sabbath school - who have by their corporate identity supported the leadership by acquiescing to the apostasy, and who have upheld their hands in support by their means. Is it not time that an awakened laity, pricked by the Holy Spirit as were the devout men of Israel on the day of Pentecost, cry out - "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS IN RUSSIA

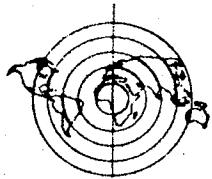
[For sometime now, we have been receiving reports bearing on the arrest and trial of Elder Vladimir Sholkov. In the letters from our readers we have been urged to say something about this. We have been waiting, accumulating data until a clear picture emerged. This report will include many of the documents which have been sent to us, along with other material which we have researched from our files on this situation. The matter is not closed, and can be considered only fully revealed when Elder Sholkov is released and brought to this country where he can speak forth as has Pastor Georgi Vins of the underground Baptist church in Russia. To this end we should cooperate with all agencies which are seeking his release, and pray that the day will soon arrive when we can know the full facts of truth in regard to some of the evidence presented in the following report.]

On March 14, 1978, Elder Vladimir Sholkov, presiding elder of the Church of the True and Free Seventh-day Adventists, was arrested in Tashkent, a Soviet city in Central Asia. [As you continue to read, please keep dates, and locations clearly before your mind.] According to Amnesty International, a London based organization, "his arrest was clearly related to his exercise of the right of freedom of conscience." On March 12, 1979 - almost a year later to the day - Elder Sholkov was tried in Tashkent and sentenced to five years strict regime in a corrective labor colony. [The events which preceded this year, and those which occurred during this year are most interesting when related to the experience of this man of God.] Amnesty International recommended in an "Urgent Action" bulletin that telegrams, and express letters be sent to Russian leaders calling for the immediate release of Elder Sholkov, and to express concern that the sentence poses a risk to the health of this 84 year old man. (Release dated, March 30, 1979.)

The combined Sunday edition of the Charleston, S. C., newspaper (March 25, 1979, p. 2A) carried the information that four other Seventh-day Adventists were also convicted along with Elder Sholkov. The Sacramento Union (Nov. 28, 1978, p. A4) reported that "Nobel prize winner Andrei Sakharov issued an appeal Monday to the World Council of Churches and to Pope John Paul II on behalf of an 83 year old Seventh-day Adventist leader scheduled to go on trial next month. Sakharov said Vladimir Sholkov, president of the Soviet Adventist Church, would be tried on anti-Soviet slander in late December in the Central Asian city of Tashkent." For some reason the trial did not take place till March.

Dr. Michael Wurmbbrand, General Director of Jesus to the Communist World, Inc., in his December, 1978, issue of The Voice of the Martyrs (p. 2), published an article captioned - "Persecuted Adventist." [The full article was reproduced in the February, 1979, "Watchman, What of the Night?" p. 10] In this article he called for all who would read it, regardless of denominational affiliation, to write to the General Conference leadership and ask them "to tell the truth about the Communist persecution and to start helping the victims." The reaction from Washington was anything but candid and forthright. One Adventist brother on the West Coast wrote directly to Kenneth Wood, editor of the Adventist Review, in a letter dated February 1, 1979, asking - "Is it true, that in spite of the glowing report of religious freedom for our Adventist brethren in the USSR, (as reported by Elder Pierson, Oct. 19, Review) that persecution is the order of the day there?" This brother cited the article in The Voice of the Martyrs noted above. Then he asked another penetrating question - "Are these conditions as reported by this group true? According to your knowledge, are there some good reasons for the cover-up by the former president of the General Conference, if the above is in fact true?" Elder Wood declined to reply to this inquiry, but instead sent a form letter dated January 17, 1979, written by Elder Alf Lohne who accompanied Pierson on his Russian itinerary. From the letter itself, it is apparent that the hierarchy in Washington found it necessary to formulate a "Dear Friend" letter to answer the many responses from Dr. Wurmbbrand's appeal. The reply of Elder Lohne is so revealing that we reproduce the same in full:

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT



General Conference of

Seventh-day Adventists

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TELEPHONE: (202) 723-0800 • CABLE ADVENTIST, WASHINGTON • TELEX: 89-580

January 17, 1979

Dear Friend:

You have written to us because of an article about Adventists in the USSR which appeared in the paper, "Jesus to the Communist World", December, 1978. The article mentions an organization in the USSR known as the "Union of the Faithful and Free Adventists" and gives names of members who have been persecuted because of their faith.


As far as we know, this "Union" is not connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have heard that one of its leaders left our church more than fifty years ago.

If members of the "Union" mentioned have been or are being persecuted because of their faith, we deeply regret this and sympathize with efforts being made to help and support them. We don't believe anyone should be persecuted for his religious convictions.

It isn't easy to know the best way to help individuals in other countries who are having difficulties because of their religion. On this point, opinions differ widely.

We trust that the above gives the information you wanted, and send you Christian greetings.

Yours sincerely,



Alf Lohne
Vice President

This transparent "dodge" of the issue on the part of Alf Lohne is matched only by the flippant reponse given to the Australian believers by the editor of the Australian Record. R. H. Parr in his "Flash Point" (April 23, 1979) indicated that the news over A. B. C., telling of the arrest and sentence of Elder Sholkov caught "the officers of the Division" somewhat "unawares because they do not know of any problems in this area, or pending persecutions." Contacting the General Conference and Elder Lohne, Parr reported they received the information that "leading Seventh-day Adventist pastors in Russia inform us that Vladimir Sholkov left our church more than fifty years ago and has never returned. He calls his organization 'Seventh-day Adventists of the True Remnant.'" Then in a flippant, unconcerned manner concludes this section - "So now you know."

This aloofness and calloused attitude could not dampen the interest of the non-Adventist world in the plight of Elder Sholkov, and his relationship to the Seventh-day Adventist church. Reuters, the English news agency, took up the story. The hierarchy in Washington found it necessary to issue a news release. They used none other than Elder Roland Hegstad, editor of Liberty, and associate director of the Public Affairs Department of the General Conference. Religious News Service (March 30, 1979, p. 21) reported Hegstad's evaluation as follows:

"Leading Adventist pastors with whom we have contact in the USSR indicate that Sholkov separated from the Adventist Church in 1924 and formed his own movement, the 'True Remnant.' We have not had direct contact with Sholkov.

"Our church is concerned that a nation should find it necessary to put an old man in prison because of his religious activities. This would be our stand whether he lived in the USSR or in any other nation. Seventh-day Adventists believe in human rights for all peoples of the world.

"We felt the need to clarify Sholkov's position with the Church because Adventists do not usually become involved with political activism to the extent that Sholkov has."

Some questions are in order for Elder Hegstad. What "political activism" has Sholkov been engaged in? Hegstad admitted - "We have not had direct contact with Sholkov." Do we judge a man before we hear him, or do we accept the judgment of his accusers?

Outside of the general comment that the Church would be concerned about the imprisonment of an old man regardless in what nation he resided, this news release was a definite attempt to disassociate the leadership in Washington from any relationship to Elder Sholkov, and to free themselves from any activity which could be interpreted as an appeal for his release. Now into this picture place this sequence of events:

Elder Vladimir Sholkov has spent 23 years of his life in Soviet prisons, having been released the time previous in 1969.

After his release in 1969, he went into hiding, and remained in hiding till his arrest in March, 1978.

One of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church recognized by the government of Russia was at the General Conference headquarters during the first part of 1978 to finalize on the trip of Pierson and Lohne to Russia.

Elders R. H. Pierson and Alf Lohne were in Russia on an officially recongized visit by the government of Russia from August 17 till September 5, 1978.

Elder Sholkov was tried and sentenced March, 1979.

In the report of his visit to Russia (Review, Oct. 19 & 26, 1978), Elder Pierson while talking of consultations with Russian leaders, noting divisions in the Church, and attempts to "heal" these fractures, not once mentioned the plight of Elder Sholkov, or that he had interceded on humanitarian grounds, let alone religious motivation, on his behalf. And it is interesting that the Press, and News Services did not take up their cry in behalf of Elder Sholkov until after the Russian visit by the Church leaders. When the media did react, the Church was quick to disassociate itself from the connection. It is further significant that when the Nobel prize winner, Andrei Sakharov, spoke out in defense of Sholkov, he did not appeal to the world leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but to the WCC, and the Pope!

Another interesting factor in the over-all picture is that other officers of the General Conference had made trips to Russia to lay the ground work for Pierson's official visit. In a report given immediately after his return from Russia at a Sabbath afternoon service in the Fletcher SDA church, Elder Pierson stated:

There have been some other men who have been in Russia before. Some of them from the General Conference had gone in order to make arrangements for this journey, to talk with government officials, and our workers there in Russia. And I at this time want to pay tribute to the work that Elder and Mrs Lohne did, Elder Carcich and these men that had gone before and who had done a good job in laying a good foundation

and had made a good impression on government there, and had made the arrangements well. (Taped Report, September 16, 1978)

Elder Alf Lohne's trip was reported in the Review (July 14, 1977). He wrote:

Our trip began in Moscow, the capital. From there we went to Alma-Ata in the South, close to the China border. In this famous winter-sports city and the surrounding area, there are many believers. It was a joy to worship with them and to share with them a message from the Bible. Frunze and Tashkent were other cities we visited in Central Asia. (p. 4)

Now keep in mind that Tashkent was where Elder Sholkov was arrested less than a year later. The route from Alma-Ata to Tashkent via Frunze is on the north side of a high mountainous area, an area well situated for hiding as Elder Sholkov did from 1969 till his arrest in 1978. While Elder Lohne reported that this area contains "many believers" with whom he met, Elder Pierson's itinerary did not include Alma-Ata, nor Tashkent, although he paid tribute in the Fletcher church to Elder Lohne, that Lohne had "made the arrangements well."

Again there are some questions that require an answer. Did Elder Lohne on his trip in 1977 to Tashkent, Frunze, or Alma-Ata make any contact with Sholkov, or learn in any way about his whereabouts? Why was Pierson's itinerary so routed that Tashkent was avoided? Why did not Elder Pierson visit Elder Sholkov in prison. Perhaps in Pierson's eyes he was a "separated brother" but was he not also a soul for whom Christ died? If Pierson really believed him to be an apostate, should he not have as the self proclaimed "first minister" of the church sought to reach him?

I am sure that should Kenneth H. Wood, editor of the Adventist Review, read this report, he would no doubt say as he did when the Special Report was released on the official audience that Elder B. B. Beach had with Pope Paul VI, that Brother Grotheer is seeing something "sinister" in what is "entirely innocent and meaningless." It must be admitted that if all there was to the picture were the facts as noted in the above paragraphs, it could be concluded that this is a case based merely on circumstantial evidence. But other facts and personal admissions make the apparent circumstantial evidence subject to some close scrutiny and reasonably valid questions as to the timing.

Back in April of 1977 - just one month prior to the trip of Elder Alf Lohne to Russia, and Central Asia, a report appeared in The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, WA, April 17, 1977, p. A16) captioned - "Illegal Christian Groups Survive in the Soviet Union." These groups were noted as "active, but underground." The article was an Associated Press release from Moscow. Among the "illegal sects" was listed Seventh-day Adventists. The parts of this newspaper story which are apropos to this report stated:

On March 14 (1977) in Tashkent, a man named Anatoly Kochergin was seized by police for transporting a cargo of 200 book illegally published by a Seventh-day Adventist printing plant. There has been no report of Kochergin's fate, but Adventists expected him to be interrogated in an effort to learn where this plant is hidden.

The nation's underground Baptists, who split away from the official Baptist Church in 1961, have a membership of some 40,000, according to best estimates. . . The Baptists maintain close ties to the illegal branch of the Seventh-day Adventists, who do not disclose their total number of members. They split from the officially recognized Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1924-1928.

"Almost all the ministers of the (illegal) church must carry on an illegal way of life because of oppression by state atheism and there is not one family that has not felt the oppression," one Seventh-day Adventist wrote recently. He cited disruption of services and the confiscation of illegal religious literature.

The illegal literature - printed largely by Baptists and Adventists - ranges from religious texts to books on Soviet human rights problems. Many of the books come out in hard cover from well-hidden printing plants and are as professionally printed and illustrated as officially published books.

"We don't reveal how many we print, but I can tell you this: We have plenty in reserve in case those in the hands of our believers are taken away," said one Seventh-day Adventist. "Tens of thousands of people have these books," he asserted.

The Associated Press release from Moscow, and the reaction of the hierarchy in Washington have one thing in common, the date of the rupture of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Russia - 1924-1928. This date coincides with the death of Lenin on January 21, 1924, and the subsequent rise to power of Joseph Stalin. The time of the second period of persecution against Christianity in Russia is dated from 1923-1930, thus covering this same period of time. While the present policy of the Soviet government is becoming much more sophisticated than that which was used during the Lenin-Stalin period, we can formulate what issues were involved which caused the split in the Seventh-day Adventist church in 1924-1928.

Elder R. H. Pierson - as noted previously in this analysis - spoke soon after his return from Russia in the Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist church on the afternoon of September 16, 1978. His remarks were tape recorded. He gave to the assembled group answers to previously posed questions. As to whether he and Elder Lohne were able to meet and preach freely while in Russia, he replied:

We could preach freely. There are some subjects that it is better to stay away from. It isn't best to talk about the imminent appearing of Christ, because the Socialist system has something better to offer than the return of the Lord.

Thus the proclamation of the basic teaching of the church in regard to the Second Coming of Christ is one issue. In other words, are we Adventists, or are we not?

In response to the question - "Can our ministers baptize freely?" - Pierson responded - "The legal requirement in Russia, or the USSR, is that a person should not be baptized until they are eighteen years of age." [Under Krushchev, children were forbidden to attend religious services, and none were to be baptized under 30 years of age.]

In the matter of publishing, Pierson declared emphatically - "We are not able to do any publishing per se," and indicated that they were able only to print Morning Watch booklets with the texts only. This in direct contrast to the underground Adventist Church which was publishing hard cover books in a professional manner by the thousands, evidently according to the AP release in the area of Tashkent. A question again comes to mind. Did the AP release from Moscow signal Russian authorities' concern of a problem getting out-of-hand from their viewpoint, and did the hierarchy play with the government, for one month later Lohne was in the Tashkent area?

As to education, this Pierson report indicated that "there are no church schools of Seventh-day Adventists, or any type. The State takes full responsibility for education." Explaining this he said:

The Russian concept of religious liberty, however, falls a little short of the Western understanding of what religious liberty is. In the USSR, freedom of conscious there is, freedom for liturgical worship. . . However, it is not freedom to evangelize and spread one's beliefs outside of the church. It provides for the separation of church and state, and also provides for the separation of church and schools.

Herein, is one of the major problems. In conversations with government officials during his trip, the matter of required school attendance on the Sabbath was discussed. Concerning this point, Pierson commented:

This is not an easy one. It is very easy to sit in Fletcher or Washington and decided what you are going to do. But there are some ramifications in it that I am not going to mention publically here this afternoon. It takes it immediately out of the realm of the obvious and puts it into a very difficult problem.

And the problem which surfaces is very basic. The Soviet officials emphasized to Elder Pierson "that people are not punished for their religious beliefs, but for their violation of Soviet Law." And it is over this point, that the officially recognized Adventist church in Russia with the approval of the hierarchy in Washington, and the underground Adventist church separate. After mentioning the problems in the regular church - its various factions, Pierson told the Fletcher congregation:

And there are some that many years ago went underground. And those people we have no contact with today, because as I mentioned a while ago, Seventh-day Adventist believe that as far as it does not conflict with the conscience or the teachings of God's word that we should be law abiding citizens. So we haven't had contact or fraternal relationships with those that have gone underground.

What is Pierson really saying? Because the law of the State says that the education of the children is their private domain, and that these children must attend school on Sabbath, then this must be, and only those who thus bow, will we in Washington have contact with in a fraternal way. Then because there are Seventh-day Adventists whose conscience says otherwise, the official leadership

of the church choose the Soviet government in preference to the conscientious and faithful laity and clergy. Then there is the gnawing question - Would the hierarchy in Washington betray to the State those who will not bow to their dictums?

Now let us "walk" this official pronouncement down "the corridor of time" a few years. When the State says - rest and worship on Sunday - it is the law of the land, and we are not arresting you because of your religious beliefs and convictions in regard to the Sabbath, but because you are violating the law of the land, will Wilson, or whoever his successor might be, disavow any connection with those who believe that they ought to obey God rather than man? Will they betray such to the State, who might have to go underground to follow their beliefs?

The real issue becomes even more poignant with the release of the Soviet Baptist leader, Georgi Vins. While the break in the Baptist group came much later than in the Adventist body, nevertheless the issue is very much the same. In an interview with a Time's John Kohan, Vins stated - "Our situation is difficult for Western Christians to understand." (May 21, 1979, p. 83) It was explained that Baptists since the days of John Bunyan and Roger Williams have traditionally believed in the total separation of church and state. [I thought Adventists also held to this view, and that Roland Hegstad championed this concept.] However, attempts to practice this belief in the Soviet Union have received hard treatment from the government. "Baptists who follow Soviet rules can hold worship services, but the government forbids them to preach the word of God in public or to bring up their children with religious instruction." (ibid) The "reform Baptists" of whom Vins is a leader resist these strictures of the Soviet government, but insist that they are not "political dissidents," nor are they involved in "political activism." Vins in commenting on this stated:

In accordance with biblical teaching, we believe that every authority is ultimately from God and that we are obliged to submit ourselves to such authority on all civil matters. To work. To pay taxes. To show respect to the government. But when it is a question of faith, then we submit ourselves to God alone. (ibid.)

It is interesting to observe that the AP release from Moscow noted that the Reform Baptists maintain close ties with the illegal branch of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Evidently the Adventists whom Elder Sholkov represents believe the same as expressed by Pastor Vins. This means simply that the charge leveled by Elder Roland Hegstad (See p. 6) that the underground Adventists were involved in "political activism" which the Church could not countenance is totally absurd, unless the Church has abandoned the concept of total separation of church and state. Perhaps, Liberty, which Hegstad edits, no longer champions true religious liberty as once advocated by Roger Williams. How have the mighty fallen and great lights grown dim!

However this is not all of the revelation given by Vins of things behind the "Iron Curtain." He charged that the officially recognized All Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists "is linked in the closest possible way with the authorities, including the KGB," the Soviet secret police. (RNS, June 8, 1979, p. 16) Does this mean then that those of the leadership of the government recognized Seventh-day Adventist Church are also in close connection with the KGB? Is the

Pastor Kulakov, who helped make the final arrangements for the Pierson-Lohne official trip to Russia, also linked with the KGB? Will those coming to the 1980 General Conference Session from Russia - this was one of the objects of the Pierson conversations with the government leaders while in Russia to secure Russian Adventist representation from Russia - be eyes and ears for the KGB? Is this why also, the Church leadership is not desirous for Elder Sholkov to be released and come to the USA, as has Pastor Vins? Could Elder Sholkov tell too much? Perhaps Dr. Richard Wurmbbrand's appeal to ask the church's leadership "to tell the truth about the Communist persecution and to start helping the victims" if heeded, would reveal more than they really want known. And, all of this "cover up" on the part of the hierarchy in the light of what is now known through Pastor Vins release, lends validity to the circumstantial evidence beginning with the visit of Elder Alf Lohne to Tashkent in 1977, prior to Elder Sholkov's arrest in 1978.

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Marxism is Satanism

In his book - Was Karl Marx a Satanist? - Dr. Richard Wurmbbrand presented "unchallengeable documents that the founder of modern Communism was high priest of a sect of devil worshipers." More proof has since been adduced. "Lunatcharskii, a leading Soviet philosopher, wrote in Socialism, a Religion that Marx put aside all contact with God and brought Satan in front of marching proletarian columns. The fight with Communism is a fight with the devil himself." (p. 3, "The Voice of the Martyrs," 7/1979)

Should We Bargain with the Devil?

Pope Pius XI had said, "In the matter of salvation of souls, to prevent great evils which might lose them, I have courage to bargain even with the devil personally." John XXIII said he had the same courage. But one cannot bargain with the devil without making some concession to him. How then will souls be saved? How will evils be prevented?

We believe Jesus is the truth. He never lies. The devil is a liar. He never says the truth. Jesus spoke with the devil but only to tell him "No" to all proposals. Let this also be your attitude toward all his proposals. Do not enter into any further discussion with the evil one. (Ibid.)

"When men who profess to serve God ignore His paternal character, and depart from honor and righteousness in dealing with their fellow men, Satan exults, for he has inspired them with his attributes. They are following in the track of Romanism." (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 362.)